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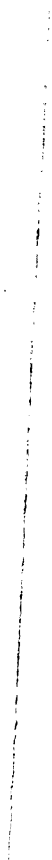


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A COUNTRY MUSE.





# A COUNTRY MUSE

BY

NORMAN R. GALE.

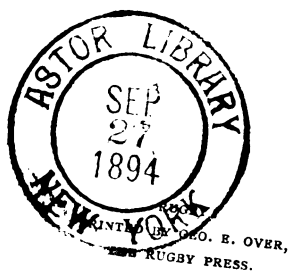
LONDON

DAVID NUTT in the STRAND

1892

*J*

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## PREFACE.

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The contents of this book have been selected from several small volumes of verse issued for private circulation between the years 1888 and 1891.

Kindly notices in several of the leading literary Reviews have encouraged the author to submit his work to a larger circle of readers. Included in *A Country Muse* are some verses not hitherto published.

*Rugby, May, 1892.*



## SONG.

---

**T**HIS peach is pink with such a pink  
As suits the peach divinely ;  
The cunning colour rarely spread  
Fades to the yellow finely ;  
But where to spy the truest pink  
Is in my Love's soft cheek, I think.

The snowdrop, child of windy March,  
Doth glory in her whiteness ;  
Her golden neighbours, crocuses,  
Unenvious praise her brightness !  
But I do know where, out of sight,  
My sweetheart keeps a warmer white.

## TO A NEST OF YOUNG THRUSHES.


---

**D**EAR little birds, you're ready now to fly,  
But just a word before you say "goodbye,"  
And flash across the stately fields of rye  
To flit afar !  
Sit in a line upon that wild-rose spray,  
And pay attention to the things I say,  
Which will not last until the dying day  
And evening star.

You yonder, by that angry-looking thorn,  
Clean wings and breast to-morrow, neither scorn  
The sage advice of very long years born  
And thin grey hairs !  
And you that perch the nearest to my face  
Please have the modesty and courtly grace  
To check that coming song—'tis not the place  
For evening prayers.

Now, little thrushes, shall we not begin  
 Before the stonechat's clink so crisp and thin ;  
 Ere larks hang o'er us with that lovely din  
 We heard last night ?  
 Sit still, my pretty ones, for now's the time  
 To sip of wisdom ere the winter rime  
 Freeze summer hearts and hush the laughing chime  
 Once loud and bright.

Well, first of all, I knew you ere you came  
 To live in this my hedge. That dear old dame,  
 Your mother, trespassed on my lands ; small blame  
 She's had from me !  
 I knew the nook she chose, and saw her beak  
 Fetch straw and grass, and tho' we could not speak  
 We were the best of friends, and very meek  
 She'd ever be.





And soon the tender architect, by aid  
Most gladly lent by him who sweetly played  
The part of lover sighing to a maid,  
Built yon old nest.  
Her mate and she would stand upon its side  
To see if it were firm and sure to bide  
The stress of wind when you were rocked inside  
Beneath her breast.

Yes, it was safe. One morning when at last  
The rising sun long shadows westward cast,  
I left my bed, and o'er the lawnland passed  
In splashing dew ;  
The quickset scratched me as I pushed my hand  
To help me view the home so rarely planned—  
Four globes of blue with dots of black I scanned,  
And these were you !

Only when you are parents you will know  
The patience of your mother. Time will show  
By equal proof the tenderness and glow  
Of love she gave !

She kept you warm the while her merry mate  
Sat like a sentry on that unhinged gate,  
Truer than hearts that have no strength to wait,  
Be saved and save.

At last her heart stirred life within the shell,  
And how her bosom fluttered, who can tell,  
When first she felt that all was very well,  
And soon her chicks  
Would chirp as birds, and stare up to the sky,  
And marvel at the moon so fair and high  
That sailed across their home and sank so nigh  
Behind the ricks ?

Then were dire huntings of the early worm  
And crumbs of bread to keep alive the germ  
Of being in you, make your legs grow firm  
And strong to hold  
The ground or twig when first with infant strut  
You left the thrushes' land of Lilliput,  
Half-tumbling in some wicked winter rut  
When over-bold.

When you were sucklings, so to speak, I knew  
The tale of feathers almost of the crew  
That weathered winds which swayed them as a shrew  
Rocks restless child ;  
But then I kept my room awhile, and when  
I next might hear the robin and the wren  
I found the babies nearly grown to men,  
And somewhat wild.

And you, Miss, you it was—I know your breast—  
Were sitting watching, waiting for the rest  
Who, far afield, were rambling in the quest  
Of sights and food :  
You feared my coming, squeaked, o'er-balanced, fell  
Down at my feet, and—is it fair to tell ?—  
Wept tears of fright, or what did just as well,  
And did you good.

Your brothers laugh, but from that slight mishap  
I knew you well, and in my easy cap  
I set you, stroking you, upon my lap  
Till calm again.  
I pressed my cheek against the dainty lace  
That set in ruffles round your heart's warm place,  
And made you sweetheart for a moment's space,  
And lost my pain.

I still am here, but you are going hence  
Beyond my far field's very farthest fence  
Out into shadows looming large and dense,  
Across the sedge  
"To see the world." What's that ? to woo, to wive  
Be vagrants some, and some be plump and thrive !  
To fall in snares, be shot, be saved alive  
For next year's hedge ?

And I am left. My birds, there was a year  
When I was gathering twigs, and, summer near,  
Looked for a mate, a whitethroat mate, to cheer  
My lonely days ;  
But she, God rest her, came not to my lure  
For angels found her pathways that were sure  
And rich with blossoms white and sweet and pure  
In sunny ways.

She won a nest. And sometimes when I yearn  
For peace in peace my slower footsteps turn  
And seek the house whose cheering windows burn  
Upon the hill ;  
And she, as wife and mother, still can reach  
Me both her hands, and even gently teach  
Her comely cheeks that olden glow of peach  
At memory's thrill.

And I could find no bird to share my nest ;  
Nowhere to lay my head, no gracious breast  
To throb for me and beat beside my rest  
A low calm tune.  
Home is not home no baby laughter nigh,  
And, Hannah, well I understand the cry,  
"O Father, give me children, or I die  
Now very soon."

Dear little thrushes, if you rub your eyes  
And gape and stretch when I philosophise,  
Unbend that burdened spray and lightly rise  
Above the thorns.  
Above the thorns ! the thorns are far too thick,  
And do not only grow on rose and quick,  
But spring from life and poison as they prick—  
What dreadful yawns !

Just one word more, one taste of mental food—  
Practise an art that's little understood,  
The art of arts, the art of being good,  
Not saintly sad ;  
Nor go where selfishness with custom herds ;  
Be gentle to your fellows, soft in words,  
So shall you win the paradise of birds  
Singing and glad.

## CUPID.

---

LOVE, I met thee yesterday,  
With an empty quiver,  
Coming from Clarinda's house  
By the reedy river.

And I saw Clarinda stand  
Near the pansies, weeping,  
With her hands upon her breast  
All thine arrows keeping.

When the dewdrops came like stars,  
Full of little flashes,  
All Clarinda's tears I kissed  
From her shining lashes.



A SONG.

---

FIRST the fine, faint, dreamy motion  
Of the tender blood  
Circling in the veins of children—  
This is Life, the bud.

Next the fresh, advancing beauty  
Growing from the gloom,  
Waking eyes and fuller bosom—  
This is Life, the bloom.

Then the pain that follows after,  
Grievous to be borne,  
Pricking, steeped in subtle poison—  
This is Love, the thorn.

## A PETITION.

---

**O**NCE in the daring days,  
Born out of strife,  
Gods of my fashioning  
Sprang into life—  
Gods of high flight that scorn  
Death as he plods,  
Wonderful, winged and wild,  
Glittering gods !  
Yet were they weak as reeds,  
Bending for this,  
Only a woman's eyes,  
Only her kiss.

Then did a god in me,  
Youngest and fair,  
Bind me with luminous  
Tangles of hair ;

Drive me to roam at night  
Under the moon  
Till it was winter-time  
Even in June !  
Then in his treachery,  
Traitor and spy !  
Snared her away I loved,  
Left me to die.

Soon when he deemed that I  
Pardoned the smart,  
Lo, he, importunate,  
Cried at my heart !  
Shelter I gave him not,  
Nought of my breast  
E'en though he fainted there  
Bleeding, oppressed.

Then did each god in me  
Powerless seem,  
And at his altar changed  
Into a dream !

What has a man to do ?  
Toil, and grow old  
Breaking his heart to gain  
Silver and gold :  
Happy to-day with one  
Dearest and wife ;  
Ruined by lives that spring  
Out of his life !  
Wrinkles and heavy eyes,  
Vanishing grace—  
Rags on the girl he loved,  
Want on her face !

But if his shallop sail  
Safe on the sea,  
Laden with spice and pearls,  
Laughter and glee,  
Fortune but blesses him  
When he is grey,  
When the love-light is faint,  
Stealing away ;  
So that his quiet years,  
Passed in his chair,  
Lack the fine fire to kiss  
Love's loosened hair !

Gods shall I yearn to stay,  
Stoop and grow sad,  
Poor, since no riches buy  
Aught that I had ?


Never again to speed  
Over the lawn,  
Over the hills to catch  
Sparkles of dawn !  
Never again to wait  
Down by the brook,  
Wait for her coming feet,  
Long for her look !

Gods that have fashioned me,  
Take me again,  
Take me, forgiving me  
Error and stain ;  
Spare them that love me yet,  
Find them a face—  
Find them a heart and life  
Dear in my place ;

And when the swallow's wings  
Whispering sweep  
Leave me a little while  
Dreaming asleep !

There for my covering  
Grant me, I crave,  
Armies of rapid weeds  
Storming my grave !  
Regiments with grassy spears  
Marching along  
Chanting for me alone  
Snatches of song !  
And let the friends who come  
Seeking me start  
Birds from my resting feet,  
Birds from my heart.

Here in the dewy moss,  
Here lay me down  
Far from the smoke and dust,  
Far from the town ;  
Out of the breaking hearts,  
Terrors and tears ;  
Out of the selfishness  
Folly and fears ;  
Far from the bitter wrong  
Waiting for right ;  
Into the cold and dark  
Looking for light !





SONG.

---

WAIT but a little while—  
The bird will sing  
And chant her new-year melodies  
Unto the spring,  
Till he who's in the cedar there  
Is moved to trill a song as rare,  
And pipe her fair.

Wait but a little while—  
The bud will break ;  
The inner rose will ope and glow  
For summer's sake ;  
Fond bees will lodge within her breast  
Till she herself is plucked and prest  
Where I would rest.

Wait but a little while—

The maid will grow

Gracious with lips and hands to thee,

With breast of snow.

To-day Love's mute, but time hath sown

A soul in her to match thine own,

Though yet ungrown.

## A DRINKING SONG.

---

FACES prim and starched and yellow  
Ne'er would meet us in the street  
If with Bacchus, rare old fellow,  
Folks would quaff the vintage sweet !  
Round is he, and glowing scarlet  
Shines upon his ample face ;  
Each who shirks his toast's a varlet  
Fit for only frills and lace !  
Here's a cup to luck,  
Here's a cup to folly !  
Here's a butt to drown the slut,  
Tearful Melancholy !

If the skein of life be twisted  
Bacchus can the knot untie ;  
If Dame Fortune grow close-fisted  
Bacchus knows to win her eye.  
Oh, his mellow laugh and lusty,  
And his nimble train of winks

Could unfreeze the desert-dusty,  
 Moping, monumental Sphinx !  
     Here's a cup to luck,  
     Here's a cup to folly !  
     Tap a butt to souse the slut,  
     Damp old Melancholy !

Would you sue to whitethroat Rosa  
     Clink a glass with Bacchus first ;  
 If it chance the maiden shows a  
     Black face, home and drown the worst !  
 What ? a wench with wine to meddle ?  
     Many will, though many pout—  
 Love's a tinker—let him peddle  
     While we roar the flagon out !  
     Here's a cup to luck,  
     Here's a cup to folly !  
     Here's a butt to drench the slut,  
     Puling Melancholy !

## A SIN.

---

I MET a woman in the street  
The angry wind seemed blowing through :  
I halted, for the way she trod  
Reminded me of you.

She turned and spake in tones that matched  
Her soft, tear-clouded eyes of blue :  
I gave her bread because her voice  
Reminded me of you.

But as I went upon my road  
The sin flashed full upon my view—  
In that I only gave to God  
In memory of you !

## A LOVE SONG.

---

**H**ER breast is snow with sun thereon,  
Her eyes than Indian stars more fair ;  
Her little ears are pink pearls caught  
In glossy nets of falling hair.

I love her robe that skims the grass,  
I love those lips that shine with glee ;  
But most I love the wise young heart  
Uncaptured in captivity.

No tame and tutored echo she  
Of all upon her lover's lips ;  
She scorns to bear across her soul  
The changeless shadow of eclipse !

But full of fire and living help  
Discovers to my blinder eyes  
Green alleys that may wind—who knows ?—  
To peace and Paradise.

## SPRING.

---

WHAT did Spring-time whisper ?  
*O ye rivulets*

*Waking from your trance so sad,  
Pleased to welcome fisher-lad*

*With his little nets,  
Speed, for summer's in the air,  
Prattle, for the breeze is warm,  
Chatter by the otter's lair,  
Bubble past the ivied farm ;  
Wake the primrose on the banks,  
Bid the violet ope her eyes,  
Hurry in a flood of thanks  
Underneath serener skies !  
What a revel's coming soon—  
Fairies trooping o'er the leas,  
Making magic by the moon,*

*Crowned with wood-anemones !  
What a haunted heart the thrush  
Nurses in the blackthorn bush,  
Full of splendid songs to sing,  
Cheery welcomes of the Spring—  
Spring has come !*



## SUMMER.

---

**W**HAT was Summer chanting ?  
*O ye brooks and birds,  
Flash and pipe in happiness  
Stirring hearts that cares oppress  
Into shining words !  
Here's a maze of butterflies  
Dancing over golden gorse,  
Here's a host of grassy spies  
Sunshine has set free, of course !  
Wonder at the wind that blows  
Odours from the forest sweet ;  
Marvel at the honied rose  
Heaping petals at her feet ;  
Hark at wood-nymphs rustling through  
Brakes and thickets, tender knee'd !  
Hark ! some shepherd pipe there blew !*

*Was it Pan upon a reed ?  
Oh, the pinks and garden-spice,  
Nature's ev'ry fair device,  
Mingled in a scented hoard  
Expected, longed for and adored—  
Summer's come !*

## AUTUMN.

---

WHAT did Autumn murmur?  
*O ye sheaves of gold  
Gathered in the sun-burnt field  
Where the sowing-labours yield  
Treasures manifold,  
Here's a jug of rare old ale  
Beading still the reaper's beard,  
While he whistles down the vale  
As the humming farm is neared!  
What a saucy knot of maids  
Eggs him on to kiss his prize!  
What a pack of bouncing jades  
Binds a kerchief o'er his eyes—  
Twirls him thrice, and bids him search  
Whom he may the while they pinch,  
Prick, and leave him in the lurch,*

*Each one shrilling like a finch !  
Ah, the starlight country-dance,  
Not without its rough romance—  
Not without the fiddle's beat  
Speeding Cicely's flashing feet—  
Autumn's come !*

## WINTER.

---

WHAT did Winter mutter ?  
*O ye frozen ponds*

*Ring, as on the flying skate*

*Rapid couples, maid and mate,*

*Skim in cosy bonds !*

*Bless me, what a scarlet nose*

*Comes with Robin home from school !*

*How his Pilot Jacket shows*

*Ghosts of snowballs on the wool !*

*Here are drifts beside the door,*

*Flakes that melt on Laura's face,*

*Shameless hurricanes that roar*

*Anger into ev'ry place !*

*Here's a splendid pavement-slide*

*Made by pourings from the jugs ;*

*Even babies take a pride*

*Helping with their china mugs !  
Now's the hour when chestnuts roast,  
Now for father's promised ghost !  
Children, Winter's come anew—  
Love him, for he worships you !  
Winter's come !*

## A PASTORAL.

---

THE last cow's milked and Mary's free  
To cool her face so warm ;  
She pats old *Ginger* tenderly  
And lends her comely arm  
To hoist the pail  
Across the rail,  
And foots it homeward to the farm.

The bodice of her dairy-dress  
Is full of milk-white loveliness,  
And in her cheek there vies  
The wildrose with the snowdrop small  
That makes a deeper blue of all  
The violets in her eyes !

With fearful hope and happy fear  
She listens for Jock's tread,  
And when his whistle proves him near  
She does not turn her head  
Because her face  
May show the trace  
Of love too great till she is wed !

The bodice of her dairy-dress  
Goes up and down in dear distress,  
And in her conscious cheek  
The snowdrop changes to a rose,  
And in her eyes each violet shows  
The love it cannot speak !



## A SONG.

---

I WILL not say my true love's eyes  
Outshine the noblest star ;  
But in their depth of lustre lies  
My peace, my truce, my war.

I will not say upon her neck  
Is white to shame the snow ;  
For if her bosom hath a speck  
I would not have it go.

My love is as a woman sweet,  
And as a woman white ;  
Who's more than this is more than meet  
For me and my delight.

## RENUNCIATIONS.

---

**D**AN CUPID, get thee gone!  
I will no more endure thee—  
Thy wailings and thy fun,  
Thy promisings to cure me!  
So shy and shrewd,  
So pure and lewd,  
So full of shade and sun  
I can no more endure thee—  
Dan Cupid, get thee gone!

O woman, get thee gone!  
No more shalt thou undo me—  
Of whims and vapours spun  
Thou shalt not come unto me!  
Both dry and dew,  
Both false and true,  
Budge, wench, and run, run, run!  
No more shalt thou undo me—  
O woman, get thee gone!

## A FUNERAL.

---

**W**E carried you one sullen Winter day  
Along a road of no return for you,  
No coming back for you, O Friend.  
We bare your body, for your soul, men say,  
Viewless, had sped into the angels' view  
And left the world to circle to its end.  
We bare you on our shoulders though the wind  
Came o'er the hedges with a cry that made  
Us tremble in the mire—still we bare  
You safe into the little church, and prayed  
In tears.

Ah, wise in action and in words most wise,  
We may not gaze into your earnest eyes  
And in their noble steadfastness admire  
Pure heart, clean mind, and flame of sacred fire  
To burn up evil and attain the skies !

For in a searching wind we, tearful, bore  
You safe into the church—our spirits sore  
To think that we should walk with you no more ;  
And when the priest read comfort from his book  
Lo, it was cold to us who might not look  
Upon your face !

And then anew in tenderness we raised  
Your body up and placed it near the grave ;  
But God our strength and Christ our hope be praised  
That we shall gaze on you as Mary gazed  
On the Redeemer when He rose to save !  
Slowly, as falls a tear that slowly starts  
From some great agony, the coffin sank,  
But all your heart was treasured in our hearts ;  
And when the Sexton from the earthen bank  
Dropt clods upon you tears fell warm and fast,

For though your eyes were closed and low your head  
It was as if you lived—and we were dead !

Whether along the lane or by the field  
We all sobbed homeward, hard it is to tell !  
A black-bird in the coppice close-concealed  
Piped out of tune to grief within our breasts  
And jarred against the unseen bell that pealed—  
A late lark's song still wavered overhead,  
Not beautiful, O Friend, for you were dead—  
Not lovely, Friend of friends, for you were dead !

## HOLY GROUND.

---

SHY maids have haunts of still delight,  
The lover glades he never tells;  
And one is mine where mass the bright  
And odoured chimes of foxglove-bells—

A dewy, covert, silent place  
Where surely long ago God walked  
Close to His creature's blinded face,  
And for his finer moulding talked.

There hawthorn glows as if white-hot,  
God present, it were sacred found  
To preach a creed too oft forgot—  
That all we tread is holy ground.

Ah, could we but remember this  
Our thoughts would spring as purely up  
To labour for our fellows' bliss  
As doth to heaven a snowdrop's cup!

*LABORE CONFECTO.*

---

*A* *H God, how good and sweet it is*  
*To have so fair a rest*  
*For such a weary, weary head*  
*On such a white, white breast !*

**Ah** me, how sweet and good it is  
To leave the city's lamps,  
Its multitude of merchant-men,  
Its multitude of tramps.

To find the children eager-eyed,  
Expectant of my tread—  
Bright little angels scantily robed  
In readiness for bed !—

To hear the music of a voice  
That welcomes me at night ;  
To see within her eyes of love  
A rare and sudden light !—

To watch the youngest at her heart,  
And hear with ecstasy  
His uncouth dialect of joy  
When calling out to me !

The finest language lacking words  
The world has ever had !  
And how the spirit answers it !  
And how the soul is glad !

Peace, peace indeed, with labour done,  
The babies kissed to sleep,  
To hear the household chronicles—  
What made the children weep ;

What dandelions grew beside  
The dock-plants in the lanes ;  
How Baby puckered up his face  
At stinging-nettle pains !



Peace, peace indeed! And then to sit  
Beside my Love's low chair,  
And sometimes feel her hand—sometimes  
Her lips upon my hair!

And bliss it is, returning late,  
To see her, half-divine,  
Calm as a statue-saint, asleep,  
And think—*This angel's mine.*

Gold, pink and snow in one she lies  
Toward my vacant place  
As if she hoped when she awoke  
At once to find my face.

Ah God, how good and sweet it is  
To have so fair a rest  
For such a weary, weary head  
On such a white, white breast!

## A SONG.

---

I SAW a weeping maiden  
A-searching in the morn  
For Love that's half a rosebud,  
For Love that's half a thorn :  
She sought him on the hill-top  
And o'er the dewy lea,  
But he was standing in the shade,  
Was waiting there with me !

He sang not in the meadow,  
He piped not near the stream,  
Nor hid in ferny forests,  
The darling of her dream :  
He lurked not in the poppies,  
He shone not in the sky ;  
But called to her from out my heart,  
And yet she passed him by !

TO A MAID SLEEPING ON  
THE LAWN.

---

GOLD and roses,  
Roses, gold !

Not a thorn to  
Prick the bold !  
She reposes,  
As of old  
Gold and roses,  
Roses, gold.

Love and kisses,  
Kisses, love !  
Whiter-breasted  
Than a dove !  
When she misses  
This her glove,  
Love and kisses,  
Kisses, love,

Sweet and lily,  
Lily, sweet,  
I will throw me  
At her feet  
In this stilly  
Rose-retreat,  
Sweet and lily,  
Lily, sweet !

## A SHEPHERD'S SONG.

---

COME, sweetheart, do not cry !  
Our love was born to die ;  
For Love's a nimble fellow,  
Who rarely stays to mellow.  
Some lusty shepherd swain  
Will pinch your cheek again  
When these fresh tears are dry—  
Come, sweetheart, do not cry !

Why, Delia, do not pout !  
A flame must e'en go out,  
And honest lads would falter  
To pledge the fool won't alter !  
Let's be as friend to friend,  
Kiss once, and homeward wend  
With hearts both wise and stout—  
Why, Delia, do not pout !

A SONG.

---

I NEED some music for my brain  
As pansies need the dew ;  
Sing that heart-breaking song again,  
And let me play for you.

Of old a sigh betrayed your breast,  
The courier of your pain ;  
And just one tear-drop, unrepressed,  
Came, shone, and fled again.

You loved me then. And when you ask  
If I can play it yet  
I sit and sound the tender task  
I never may forget.

And if you falter at the part  
Where long ago you sighed,  
Remember we are heart to heart  
Serenely satisfied.

## AN OUTLINE.

---

As Mary walked ahead with John  
We heard glad voices ringing ;  
But suddenly there came a pause  
Filled up by wood-birds singing,  
Filled up by wild birds singing.

As John came back to us alone  
His eyes with tears were welling.  
'Twas but a simple tale he told  
That was not worth the telling,  
Ah me ! not worth the telling !

## A COUNTRY DANCE.

---

*Fiddle away, Old Time—  
Fiddle away, Old Fellow !*

*Airs for infancy, youth and prime,  
Tunes both shrill and mellow.*

*Fiddle away,  
Or grave or gay,  
For faces pink or yellow—  
Scrape your song a lifetime long,  
Fiddle away, Old Fellow !*



Here are country maidens' breasts  
     As white as hedgeside May ;  
 Here are lips as red as hips  
     That make October gay ;  
 Here are buckled feet, and comely  
 Limbs unspoiled by hose that's homely  
     Twinkling as you play !  
 Though your bow be fast as fire  
 Feet like these shall hardly tire  
     While the stars will stay !

*Fiddle away, Old Time—*  
*Fiddle away, Old Fellow !*  
*Airs for infancy, youth and prime,*  
*Tunes both shrill and mellow.*

Here's a wooden bench where sit  
Two old crones in tears  
Have not flung a romping leg  
Fully forty years !  
Lovers, sons and daughters gone,  
Still they sadly linger on  
Mingling hopes and fears :  
And in the merry dancing-rings  
There's not a bouncing maiden springs  
With blood allied to theirs ;  
And not a bearded mouth that smiles  
Rejoiced their hut with baby wiles  
Or learned their gentle prayers !

*Fiddle them peace, Old Time—  
Fiddle them rest, Old Fellow !  
Tunes that ring through winter rime  
Something of sweet and mellow !*

Down scented lanes that sweethearts know  
The panting dancers go,  
And bodices of goddesses  
Still mark the music's ebb and flow.  
" Ah, come with me across the ridge  
And dream upon the shining bridge,"  
Says John to rebel Kate,  
" While in the reedy river-plots  
Small, moonlit, blue forget-me-nots  
Do hear the shingle grate."

Here softly lies in starlight eyes  
That story, old as are the stars,  
Unchanged beneath the changing skies  
On mountain-tops, by harbour bars,  
Wherever Venus in her cars,  
Dove-drawn, upon her mission flies!  
And as they lean across the rail  
The water clasps their faces pale—  
    But sweeter far than this—  
The lips within the stream unite  
(O star of Love, so strangely bright!)  
    And tremble to a kiss.

*Fiddle them faith, Old Time—  
Fiddle them love, Old Fellow!*

*Beautiful songs of wedded prime,  
Low and sweet and mellow.*

*Let your brilliant bow  
Tenderly always go,  
And happy things on golden strings  
Fiddle them, dear Old Fellow!*

## A LOVE SONG.

---

SOME may praise thy wondrous tresses  
    With a poet's golden speech ;  
Some may muse within their meshes  
    On thy cheek, so soft's the peach ;  
Some may sing that stars above thee  
    Wait for thee to light their skies ;  
I can only say—*I love thee*,  
    With my lips and with mine eyes.

Some may call thee true and tender  
    In an ode upon thy face ;  
Or may hymn thy bosom's splendour,  
    Snow beneath its snowy lace !  
Some may sing that saints above thee  
    Are less pure in Paradise ;  
I can only say—*I love thee*,  
    With my lips and with mine eyes.

WERE I A STAR.

---

WERE I a star I would not shine  
Save when my Love was looking forth  
With star-like eyes surpassing fine  
And clustered glories of the north.

And if a ray from me should sink  
Upon her face, her peerless breast,  
It could not tremble on the brink  
Of deeper lustre, truer rest :

Ah, surely if her gleaming hand  
Should prison this one summer night  
I might come down to wonderland,  
Made mortal, to regain my light !

Were I a star I would not shine  
Save when my Love looked up to see  
Star flash to star a silver sign  
That she was searching heaven for me !

WERE I A BIRD.

---

WERE I a bird I would not pipe  
Save when my Love was near the tree,  
That I might watch her lips so ripe  
Half-open in delight at me.

And I would sing a song divine  
Would make her clasp her heart in pain,  
Yet never tire, and always pine  
To hear me carol it again.

A song so full of tears and ache,  
Of such fair sadness and unrest,  
That she her homeward path should take  
And yearn to lodge me in her breast.

Were I a bird I would not sing  
Save when my Love was near the tree,  
That I might watch my music bring  
Her maiden blood in praise of me.



## THE CLOSING OF PARADISE.

---

THE Gods who toss their bounties down  
To willing laps  
To some gave villas nested high  
Among the foliage of the sky  
Of Alp or soaring Apennine ;  
To some a Sabine farm ; to some  
The pillared porches of a home  
With marble vaults for priceless wine,  
And slaves whose solemn ebon line  
Salutes the great who go and come.

The Gods who toss their bounties down  
To willing laps  
To some sent all felicities  
Of native statues, foreign frieze,  
And gold to bribe the poet's lyre ;  
To some upon the inland sea  
A pleasure-ship near Sicily  
Where harps and echoes long have rung,  
And bards in busy vineyards sung  
For maidens purple to the knee ;

The Gods who toss their bounties down  
    To willing laps  
Gave me the joy of being free—  
Gave me the gift of poverty !  
No eagle, sinking from the sun  
At eventime, discerns afar  
The flashing of a golden star  
On roof of mine, nor slaves who press  
With all the pomp of slavishness  
To help me from my gilded car.

The Gods who toss their bounties down  
    To willing laps  
Gave me no treasure-house of pearls,  
No bevy of slim dancing girls,  
But finer gifts out-shining these—  
A little wood whose paths are few,  
Some trees made bright with fruit and dew ;  
And lastly, O my child so fair  
With masses of resplendent hair,  
They, gracious, dowered me with you !

The Gods who toss their bounties down  
     To willing laps  
 Exalted me beyond my kind  
 With all the mercies of a mind  
 That does not hungry gape for change.  
 The blackbird of a yesterday,  
 So it unlearns no liquid lay,  
 To-morrow can entice my feet  
 As pilgrims after piping sweet  
 Across the drying lines of hay.

The Gods who toss their bounties down  
     To willing laps  
 To her who left a stately house  
 To comfort me gave marvellous  
 Rare graces of pure maidenhood :  
 A benediction was her face,  
 Her heart a very tender place  
 Where love conceived the potent rule  
 To ache for others, merciful  
 Beyond the boundaries of race.

The Gods who toss their bounties down

To willing laps

Instilled in her the simple taste

Of seeking in a country waste

For Nature's hidden handiwork :

She knew all secrets of the sedge,

The "Lords and Ladies" in the hedge,

What stripling blackbird first essayed

To fly from home, and half-dismayed

Piped pitiful upon the edge.

The Gods who toss their bounties down

To willing laps

In uncontrolled abundancy

Decreed that praise of bud and bee

Should be the duty of her lips.

The thunder of the world roared on

Nor shook our stars that nightly won

The worship of our eager eyes

Sweeping the kingdom of the skies

Deserted by the westward sun.

The Gods who toss their bounties down  
    To willing laps  
Conspired to mould a million shapes—  
Crocus and grasses, seas and capes—  
To wake deep echoes in our hearts.  
What rare divine imaginings  
Conceived the ivy-spray that clings  
To other miracles, the trees!  
How magical those great decrees  
That sent us roses, birds and springs!

The Gods who toss their bounties down  
    To willing laps  
Neither forgot the violet's scent,  
Nor planets in the firmament—  
The outposts of a mystery!  
They gave to man the undefiled  
Bright rivulets and waters wild;  
They wrought at goodly gifts above,  
And, for the pinnacle of love,  
They fashioned him a little child.

The Gods who toss their bounties down

To willing laps

Remembered, and a wailing cry

Smote at my heart so tenderly—

The master-miracle was ours!

He prospered in his tiny bed,

And when my angel bent her head

Translating all his uncouth cries

By knowledge motherhood supplies

My penitence arose and fled.

The Gods who toss their bounties down

To willing laps

All suddenly announced a hate

Of me, my wood, my simple gate,

The glory of my cherry-trees!

But when for grief I scarce could speak,

Love, coming closer, kissed my cheek,

And, with the genius of caress,

By pretty acts of tenderness

Made peace more near and earth less bleak.

The Gods who toss their bounties down  
     To willing laps  
 Thought, as they bent from heaven to see,  
*This man is happier than we.*  
 Nor were these grasping Gods ashamed  
 To steal from me my Love's caress  
 And her, the fount of happiness,  
 Rainbow and sunshine of my soul  
 Till all embittered nations roll  
 Where gods nor curse again nor bless !

Ah, silent melodies of joy,  
     So sadly dumb !  
 Ah, for the wilderness of life  
 With no oasis, lasting strife  
 With love's triumphant memory !  
 The memory of her ! Ye great,  
 Who mock me and my rustic gate,  
 I am the rich man of you all !  
 What is a polished silver wall  
 Compared with her who died of late ?

## A SONG.

---

THE shyest blooms are best. The hidden bird  
Can make a midnight melody of wrong ;  
And sweetest far the Love that is not heard  
Before a kindred soul demands its song.  
How luring she that's simple-souled and staid !  
And love is ever rarest half-afraid.

The maytree has its white, the rose its red,  
The brook gold lilies, and the pool its rush ;  
The graveyard has its unforgotten dead,  
And life has beauty waking to a blush.  
But Love has tenderness and all sweet things,  
And throbs alike for cotters and for kings !



## AN UNFINISHED PICTURE.

---

'Tis Mary the milkmaid singing,  
A-singing, a-singing  
So rarely and sweet that the lark at her feet,  
All ready to start with a song in her heart,  
Presses closer the nest with her warm little breast,  
Forgetting her lay as she drinks in the sweet  
Pure music of Mary singing.

'Tis Mary the milkmaid singing,  
A-singing, a-singing  
So rarely and plain that a man in the lane  
Grows flushed in the face standing still in his place,  
And moves his red lips as the melody slips  
In a lovely and tenderly womanly strain  
From Mary the milkmaid singing.

'Tis Richard the keeper whistling,

A-whistling, a-whistling

So rarely and clear for the milkmaid to hear !

And she with a start puts her hand to her heart

That leaps in the nest of that tremulous breast

Beating time to the rollicking tune drawing near

With Richard the keeper whistling.

NASEBY EVE.

---

HERE's to men who pluck a blade,  
Whirling it for Charlie !

Here's to ev'ry willing maid

Blushing in the barley !

Pest befall the trooper knave

Cheats her of a crown, Sirs,

Chant him as a miser slave—

Let us sing him down, Sirs !

*Then let each morion be a cup,*

*And drink, my night-hawks, drink*

*Till Noll shall prick his dog's ears up*

*To listen to the clink !*

Troll a stave for Mistress Plump

Carving at the pullets

While our cans the board bethump

In the praise of bullets !

Brown October gaily hums

In our ringing sconces

As we give the hymn that comes  
Cavalier responses !

*Then let each trooper of you all  
Drench beards again and drink  
Till ev'ry Barebones, great and small,  
Can catch the ditty's clink !*

Death to Reuben Snufflenose—  
Scores of canting thinkers  
Soon to taste the burly blows  
Rained by lusty drinkers !  
Here's to trumpet, sword and glove,  
Wenches' lips at pleasure,  
While the varlet Roundheads prove  
Souls the only treasure !

*Then let each morion be a cup,  
And shout, my night-hawks, shout  
Till from his tent where Satan sups,  
Noll push his brewer's snout !*

## A THRUSH IN SEVEN DIALS.

---

**H**ERE in this den of smoke and filth  
They caged a thrush's broken heart ;  
Yet when the sun, as if by stealth,  
Shone, or a milkman's rattling cart  
Shook all her narrow wicker-work  
The bird would chirp, and very soon  
To passing Jew or Dane or Turk  
Sing some remembered forest-tune.

But Ah, the rounded notes that rung  
In emulation of her mate  
Who in the shadowed evening sung  
Beside the five-barred spinney-gate  
Were thin and false ; but still the song  
Gained pathos from its lessened spell,  
For this proclaimed aloud the wrong  
Of shutting thrushes up in hell !

But sometimes stirred to quite forget  
The crime of her captivity,  
The songster o'er the city's fret  
Flung strains of bird-divinity,  
And tried to stretch her tattered wings,  
And poise above the constant perch,  
And answered the imaginings  
Of sparrows on the murky church.

She marvelled much that they so small,  
So scant of music, plainly drest,  
Should swoop at will from wall to wall  
While she whose melody and breast  
Had fluttered whitethroats in the wood  
Should hang upon a rusty nail  
And chirp to great-eyed boys who stood  
To hear her sing in rain or hail !

'Twas when these urchins flocked around  
That most forgetful of her cage  
Her wildwood carollings she found  
Warm in her heart, untouched by age :  
So, sitting on her perch she sang  
Marsh-marigolds and river-sand  
Till all the grimy district rang  
With tales of moss and meadowland.

And then for days she would not shake  
A single utterance from her store  
Despite the outcast imps who spake  
Like *Oliver* and asked for more !  
In fluffy listlessness she sat  
And dreamed of all the grassy west—  
How she had feared the parson's cat,  
And how she built her earliest nest !

Sometimes a French Piano hurled  
Metallic scales adown the street,  
That seemed to buffet all the world,  
So hard and clear, so shrill and fleet !  
No maddened music of this kind  
Could tempt the thrush to rivalry ;  
She pecked an inch of apple-rind  
And waited till the din went by !

There from a tiny patch of sun  
She made an April for her heart !  
Imagined twigs, and sat thereon  
Though shaken by the milkman's cart !  
The slinking fog that filled her cage  
Usurped her heritage of dew,  
Of grass, of berries—all the wage  
Of hedgerows where she hid or flew.



And if perchance disdain or pride  
Made e'en her scanty chantings fail,  
*Sing, bird !* an ugly villain cried,  
And swung her fiercely on her nail !  
This was the man whose crafty nets  
Cast o'er the lilac meshed her wings—  
Ah, not for such her music set  
The song of her imaginings !

Oh, leave them in the wilderness,  
Or in the bush or in the brake ;  
Let them in liberty possess  
The haunts God fashioned for their sake !  
And all the glories of their throats  
Shall sound more glorious when they rise  
In flights and waves of noble notes  
To stir your hearts and dim your eyes.

*REQUIESCAM.*

---

THE churchyard yews may murmur on  
    Monotonous o'er me,  
But that incessant dirge which sounds  
    So very wearily  
May to the thistled grass make moan—  
I shall not hear beneath my stone.

Friends' faces shine not now again,  
    And I have breathed my last ;  
The pulse of love, the grip of scorn,  
    The ache, the stir are past :  
Life was my only deep distress—  
Sleep is my crown of happiness.

Of all I lose the loss is most  
    Of hearing birds no more ;  
Of no more hearing rebel waves  
    Insurgent on the shore ;  
The hedges, harvests, all are gone—  
My little dream of daylight's done.

## A MAID'S HOLIDAY.

---

**T**HE deep and silent undergrowth  
    Shall be my home this summer day ;  
The idle bird and breeze shall both  
    Entrance me with their lay :  
How cool to lie where shadows toss  
    In revelry upon the turf,  
And press my fingers in the moss,  
    And be no more a serf!—

No more a slave to pen and ink ;  
    No more a slave to aching dread ;  
Released from cages where I think  
    To win my daily bread.  
O little blade of grass so soft,  
    My heart is glad to find you here—  
To find your slender lance aloft,  
    With all your comrades near !

Is then your regiment, bright, alert,  
In marching order, cooled by dew,  
Camped here to watch that none may hurt  
The speedwell's speck of blue ?  
Or do you guard the foxglove-bloom  
That rings a chime it never tells,  
Round which the bees in concert boom  
And rumble in its bells ?

'Tis sweet indeed to lie and watch  
Faint figures in the open glades ;  
To see the pressing sweethearts snatch  
A tribute from the maids !  
To hear the clink of milking-pails ;  
The brisk and angry crack of whips  
That startle Colin by the rails  
From touching Cicely's lips !

But best of all, with eyes devout,  
To gaze in silence at the sky,  
And wonder if the dead look out  
Upon me as I lie :  
Across my patch of firmament  
So many angels seem to rove—  
So many friends who died and went,  
Tho' not beyond my love !

I will not wrong their happiness,  
Nor lust to bring them back again,  
For God will give fresh joys to ease  
The iron of my pain :  
He sends me lilacs, pansies, piuks,  
This deep and silent undergrowth,  
And sometimes, when my spirit sinks,  
The peace of utter sloth.

*LES MORTS SONT HEUREUX.*

---

SOME lie in their spices and linen unshrunk  
Their weariness, wonder and waiting are past ;  
They feel not the cold and their cheeks are scarce sunken,  
They dream of a light that may wake them at last :  
But though it should shine not these figures repine not,  
They sleep in their peace with the world overhead ;  
And who shall disturb them, or who shall perturb them ?  
Yea, they are the happy ones, they who are dead.

I turn me away from the noise of the street filled  
With footfalls of merchants and faces of thieves ;  
My treasure-house stands in the gold of the wheatfield,  
My books are the bushes with millions of leaves.  
The poppy stares up in my face as she bears up  
Her sleep-giving cup of imperial red,  
But Death could enchant me far more would he plant me  
Too deep down for poppies, dead dust with the dead.

The nuts slip their leashes and couch in the mosses,  
The over-ripe berry falls into the pond ;  
The butterfly's floating magnificence crosses  
Our lawn for a moment, then flutters beyond :  
And likewise we flutter a moment, and utter  
The laugh and the moan that together are wed ;  
But tho' we must weep well God give we may sleep well  
Deep down in the silences next to the dead.

Come, Merciful Sleep, where the balmy wind passes  
Not far from the slopes where anemones grow ;  
Perchance I shall learn the soft secrets of grasses,  
And hear when the world's heart begins to beat slow.  
But set up no token, and leave me unspoken—  
My name and my virtues and aught I have said ;  
The few who have kissed me, and she who has missed me,  
Need nothing to guide them to where I am dead.

If bird-dreams and shade-dreams be all unavailing  
Grant slumber in one of the many green graves;  
Give peace in sea-gardens spread under ships sailing  
Far, far from the shoreward quick tramp of the waves:  
Cold comrades to sleep with, but never to weep with,  
Stark brides that come down to us sinking as lead!  
And well if Time hold us where Ocean has rolled us,  
Unmeshed by the drag-net that draws in the dead!



## THE KISS.

---

BENEATH his eyes a fringe of lace  
Upon her bosom strangely stirs,  
For she had seen herself in his,  
And knew he saw himself in hers.

So, like a new-born star that fears  
Its own magnificence of light,  
Those dark blue glories of her face  
Seemed clouded over by the night.

Yet in that glance she found her place  
Was by his side—her all in all—  
As clearly as Belshazzar saw  
The hand that wrote upon the wall.

And wisdom lit her leaping heart  
More swiftly than the swallows skim ;  
Whereas the King dropped down his cup  
To call interpreters to him.

And, soft as mother's earliest word  
Unto her babe a moment old,  
His kiss, with Midas-touch, at last  
Came down and turned her life to gold.

## THE REASON.

---

**T**HAT I, all loveless, sing of love  
Is passing strange :

What can I know except that love  
Knows how to change ?

O Fortunate, if it be true  
Love bends his roseleaf cheek to you !

That he should make divine her eyes  
Was nought, Love felt ;  
He snowed on woman's heart a snow  
That could not melt,  
Although the slopes whereon it lay  
Were warm as rainless April day.

Love lent me angel eyes a while,  
And O ! a breast  
Of stainless snow's fresh-fallen hue  
For dreamy rest !  
Wherefore, unknissed, my lips still move  
With songs to praise the Ghost of Love.

## A SONG.

---

LOVE, with a crocus in his cap,  
Came past the streams and springs,  
His quiver full of faithlessness  
And sweet imaginings,  
In snowdrop time  
And primrose prime.

Love, with a rosebud in his cap,  
Came o'er my meadowlands;  
His gold-tipped bow he bent at me  
With only idle hands  
In tulip time  
And pansy prime.

Love, with a dead leaf in his cap,  
Outspread his velvet wings,  
Nor gathered he the arrows shot  
From off the silver strings.  
Ah, tearful prime  
Of winter-time !

## A PRIEST.

---

NATURE and he went ever hand in hand  
Across the hills and down the lonely lane ;  
They captured starry shells upon the strand  
And lay enchanted by the musing main.  
So She, who loved him for his love of her,  
Made him the heir to tracteries and signs  
On tiny children nigh too small to stir  
In great green plains of hazel leaf or vines.  
She taught the trouble of the nightingale ;  
Revealed the velvet secret of the rose ;  
She breathed divinity into his heart,  
That rare divinity of watching those  
Slow growths that make a nettle learn to dart  
The puny poison of its little throes.

Her miracles of motion, butterflies,  
Rubies and sapphires skimming lily-crests,

.

Carved on a yellow petal with their eyes  
Tranced by the beauty of their powdered breasts  
Seen in the mirror of a drop of dew  
He loved as friends and as a friend he knew.  
The dust of gold and scarlet underwings  
More precious was to him than nuggets torn  
From all invaded treasure-crypts of Time,  
And ev'ry floating, painted, silver beam  
Drew him to roses where it stayed to dream,  
Or down sweet avenues of scented lime.

And Nature trained him tenderly to know  
The rain of melodies in coverts heard.  
Let him but catch the cadences that flow  
From hollybush or lilac, elm or sloe,  
And he would mate the music with the bird.  
The faintest song a redstart ever sang

Was redstart's piping, and the whitethroat knew  
No cunning trill, no mazy shake that rang  
Doubtful on ears unaided by the view.

But in his glory, as a young pure priest  
In that great temple, only roofed by stars,  
An angel hastened from the sacred East  
To reap the wisest and to leave the least.  
And as he moaned upon the couch of death,  
Breathing away his little share of breath,  
All suddenly he sprang upright in bed !  
Life, like a ray, poured fresh into his face,  
Flooding the hollow cheeks with passing grace.  
He listened long, then pointed up above ;  
Laughed a low laugh of boundless joy and love—  
*That was a plover called*, he softly said,  
And on his wife's breast fell, serenely dead !

A SONG.

---

**M**AID of the yet unconquered heart,  
My siege to thee alone is set ;  
Love hath no secret shaft or dart,  
No web of smiles, no cunning net,  
But I will storm his arsenal  
To make thy virgin fortress fall.

Maid of inviolate snow, beware !  
With trench and mine and ev'ry test  
To lull the foe, or speak her fair,  
I march to my desire of rest :  
Nor shall the clang of war's alarms  
Hush till I find me in thine arms !



## HOPE.

---

THE flush that gathers in thy cheeks  
Sweeps down thy neck in scarlet wealth,  
And in a realm of tenderness  
Shakes roses on the snow by stealth

Because I say, *'Twere sweet enough  
To suffer Fortune's sharpest test  
So there were refuge for my head  
Among the lilies of thy breast.*

For this the sword of Damocles  
Its point above my head might swing,  
And I would joy as lovers do  
Who walk and whisper in the Spring.

Hate has no goblin at his beck  
Whose scheming brain could ever cope  
Against man's finest heritage—  
The immortality of hope.

And all my share in this shall cling  
Round thee, pure angel of my dream ;  
That when thy mating moment's here,  
When Loves surprise thee by the stream,

Filling thine eyes with softer light—  
Painting thy lips a deeper hue,  
My absence shall be poisoned thorns,  
My presence, bloom and fruit and dew !

AN EPITAPH.

---

**H**E sang a simple forest song ;  
To him the day was never long  
Amid the blooms and feathered throng  
He loved with all his heart :  
He took the hand he knew was pure ;  
He preached the faith he felt was sure ;  
God taught him how he should endure  
And gird him to depart.

A ROSEBUD.

---

LOVE's a little rosebud,  
Speak not of the thorn !  
Only watch the rosebud  
Open in the morn.  
Maiden, on the milk-white  
Beauty of thy breast  
Give the little rosebud  
Rest.

## A CREED.

---

GOD sends no message by me. I am mute  
When Wisdom crouches in her furthest cave;  
I love the organ, but must touch the lute.

I cannot salve the sores of those who bleed;  
I break no idols, smite no olden laws,  
And come before you with no separate creed.

No controversies thrust me to the ledge  
Of dangerous schools and doctrines hard to learn;  
Give me the whitethroat whistling in the hedge.

Why should I fret myself to find out nought?  
Dispute can blight the soul's eternal corn,  
And choke its richness with the tares of thought.

I am content to know that God is great,  
And Lord of fish and fowl, of air and sea—  
Some little points are misty. Let them wait.

I well can wait when upland, wood and dell  
Are full of speckled thrushes great with song,  
And foxgloves chime each purple velvet bell.

Our village is encircled by sweet sound  
Of bee and bird and lily-loving brook :  
Hence, Unbelief, for this is holy ground !

At early dawn I stand upon the sod  
And let the lark rain this upon my soul—  
The smaller in man's sight the nearer God.

At noon I linger by the curving stream,  
And watch fresh water running to the sea  
The salt of which comes not into its dream.

At eventide I lean across a gate,  
And, knowing life must set as does the sun,  
Muse on the angels in the Happy State.

Ah, let me live among the birds and bloom  
Of hazel copses and enchanted woods  
Till death shall toll me to the common tomb.

Give me no coat of arms, no pomp, no pride,  
But violets only and the rustic joys  
That throne content along the country-side;

No subtle readings, but a trusting love,  
A hand to help, a heart to share in pain,  
And over all the cooing of the dove.

How sweet the hedge that hides a cunning nest,  
And curtains off a patient, bright-eyed thrush  
With five small worlds beneath her mottled breast!

Though life is growing nearer day by day  
Each globe she loves as yet is mute, and still  
Her bosom's beauty slowly wears away.

At last the thin blue veils are backward furled,  
Existence wakes and pipes into a bird  
As infant music bursts into the world.

And now the mother-thrush is proud and gay ;  
She has her pretty cottage and her young  
To feed and lull when western skies turn grey.

It would be bitter work to set a snare,  
Catch her and hang her in a London den  
Unknown to sun and woodland wealth of air.

As with the thrush so would it be with me  
If I should leave my red-tiled roof and push  
My country shoulders through a living sea.

My song is all of birds and peasant homes,  
For on such themes my heart delights to dwell  
And sing in sunshine till the shadow comes.



I sing of daisies and the coloured plot  
Where dandelions climb the thistle's knee—  
I take what is nor pine for what is not.

I am for finches and the rosy lass  
Who leads me where the moss is thick, and where  
Sweet strawberry-balls of scarlet gleam in grass.

And this I know, that when I leave my birds,  
The lichened walls, the heartsease and the heath  
I shall not wholly fail of kindly words.

And while I journey to the distant Day  
That first shall dawn upon the eastern hills,  
Perchance some thrush will sing me on my way.

The Great Republic lies toward the East,  
And Daybreak comes when Christ with tender face  
Welcomes the poor in spirit—who were least.

## VERSES.

---

YOU will not kiss me, O my love, my love !  
You will not kiss me, but you cannot spare  
My lips for others, nor in comfort list  
If haply they should laud strange eyes and hair.

The violets and roses of my choice  
Must in your garden grow, or you are sad ;  
And if I cease to smile come shining tears  
To buy fresh smiles, whereat your heart grows glad.

Thus in austere simplicity our lives  
Are sunshine, sunshine, sunshine without heat ;  
And it is witness to your nameless charm  
That I must starve in patience at your feet.

## SONG.

---

WE walk together, you and I,  
And dream the world is ours to-day ;  
So bright the sun, so blue the sky,  
And then the clouds—so far away !  
So present is our paradise  
That both our hearts it scanty grieves  
To know that death beyond the hedge  
Is leering through the leaves.

Love, when I stoop to kiss your hand  
Across your face warm blushes pass  
Like shadows floating o'er the land,  
Elusive islands on the grass :  
And when my lips essay your own,  
And all your breast insurgent heaves,  
Wide eyes of Death may stare in vain  
When looking through the leaves.

The corn on yonder yellow hill  
Has that ripe colour of your hair ;  
To-morrow men will whistle shrill,  
And neither corn nor poppy spare.  
To-day, at least, the field shall glow ;  
To-day, at least, our fate reprieves ;  
So love me, dearest, spite of Death  
Who leers between the leaves !

### THREE SCORE AND TEN.

---

SILENT he sits from day to day  
With eyes as dull as smoky glass,  
And wonders in a childish way  
At shadows on the grass.

Or else the spark of memory  
Lights to his chair, now quick, now slow,  
The shades of what he used to be,  
The ghosts of Long Ago!

Remembrances of velvet cheeks  
And blushes that are Cupid's spies  
Revealing what a shy heart speaks  
To lovers' burning eyes!

And as they glide in dumb review  
He stretches out his withered hand  
Desiring you, O Joy, and you,  
O Love, to hear and stand.

"Once more," he cries to Time, "once more  
To rise at dawn and swiftly start  
To find my milkmaid as of yore  
And press against her heart!"

"Again," he cries to Time, "again  
To swing my boy upon my knee,  
And kiss the scented cherry-stain  
On lips upraised to me!"

"Again to call for Joan, and hear  
Her steps obedient to the call;  
But not again the depthless fear,  
The one thing worst of all—

The narrow coffin and the face  
Cold, comfortless and sightless there,  
And whiter than the filmy lace  
Her breast was wont to bear!"

-

Ah, Life, that dost begin so fair  
With eager heart and tender kiss  
And strokings of Love's golden hair,  
That thou should'st come to this—

This—that a broken man should watch  
And pray for just one day—one more—  
While Death is trifling with the latch,  
And fumbling at the door !

## A SONG.

---

I KISSED thee once.  
No deep distress,  
No bitterness  
Of piercing word or silent bird  
Can cloud with strife  
This joy of life—  
I kissed thee once.

I kissed thee once.  
When wings apace  
Towards thy face  
The robber bee to plunder thee  
Not first he sips  
Thy honied lips—  
I kissed thee once !



*WHO will maytake Love's pipe from out my fingers,  
 Who will may sing the songs I used to sing ;  
 No more where dying daylight shyly lingers  
 Will I, made musical, salute the Spring.*

*No more my sheep shall crop the grass around me,  
 Browsing the rings where Queen Titania trips ;  
 No more I shame the leaves and birds that found me  
 Once as a shepherd praise Clarinda's lips.*

*O woodland nymph, whose amber-coloured tresses  
 Held me so long where love-lyres woo and ache,  
 Now I desert the soul of thy caresses,  
 Struggling, all dazed, from thine enchanted brake !*

*Lie still, lost love ! Young blood will come to woo thee,  
 Blood that shall leap to find thee flushed and fair ;  
 Heroes of fire, young kings of verse shall sue thee,  
 Nest on thy heart that shines beyond compare !*

*But from my pipe hath poured its first love's splendour,  
Now will I dare the steep that bounds the plain;  
Teaching my soul its duty, stern and tender,  
Singing the truth that only comes through pain.*

1

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